



PRIME MINISTER

TRANSCRIPT OF INTERVIEW WITH PETER THOMPSON, AM PROGRAM, 5 JUNE 1989

E & O E - PROOF ONLY

THOMPSON: Well the Prime Minister has kept closely in touch with events in China throughout the weekend and he joins us now. Good morning Prime Minister. Thanks for joining me this morning.

PM: Good morning Peter.

THOMPSON: What's your reaction to the massacre in China?

PM: I profoundly deplore it. We had expressed earlier two points of view. One that we welcome the expressions of the move towards democracy that was spearheaded by the students and on the other hand also we welcome the restraint that had been exercised by the Chinese authorities. Now of course that's changed and we have this drastic loss of life as a result of the use of military force to suppress these peaceable expressions by the students and others and I have ordered that our attitude that I've expressed should be conveyed to the Chinese authorities and I've also ordered that the HMAS Parramatta which was due to go to Shanghai in the near future should not now undertake that visit and I express the hope that good sense will prevail, that the authorities that China will understand both from our own point of view that this sort of repression is not consistent with the maintenance of a viable and constructive authority in China and secondly that the rest of the world will not be able to cooperate in what we've welcomed as the opening up of China if this sort of attitude is to prevail.

THOMPSON: Would you consider more drastic steps, even the reviewing of diplomatic relations?

PM: Well that's not an issue at this time. We take a view of hope and that is that intelligence and good sense and a sensible appraisal of, if you like, China's own self interest will lead to the conclusion that this sort of action is not only contrary to the recognition of human rights but as I say is also against the self interest of China.

THOMPSON: How are you being kept up to date of what's happening there?

PM: Over the weekend I have had very little sleep. I'm not saying that in any other sense other than I've wanted to keep in touch with my people late into the night and early in the morning. We have a situation where our Embassy has been working around the clock. Their information is being fed back here not only into our Department but into our assessment agencies and I have been kept constantly informed of developments. I pay tribute to our Ambassador and his staff in China. The quality of his work is not only recognised by ourselves but by a number of other countries that recognise the quality of their work.

THOMPSON: No prospect of withdrawing staff at the moment from the Embassy?

PM: Well we haven't gone to that point. I think it's important that we should maintain the facility and the capacity to be informed of developments there.

THOMPSON: Can I turn to Iran just very briefly. Will Australia be expressing condolences at the death of Ayatollah Khomeini?

PM: The Governor-General as Head of State will be conveying the appropriate message.

THOMPSON: Which is what?

PM: Well obviously he's the Head of State and an expression of regret at his passing will be passed through. Our concern of course is with the future and we hope that with this event we hope profoundly that firstly the processes of transition within Iran will be peaceable and secondly and most importantly as far as the future is concerned, that the new leadership in Iran will take the opportunity of this change to see that Iran becomes more completely a constructive partner in the international community of nations.

THOMPSON: Do you feel pleased that this era of history under the Ayatollah's over?

PM: Well I think it's churlish to talk about pleasure on the occasion of the death of anyone but I do say this, that with the death of the Ayatollah that by definition is the end of a particular era and I express the hope as I say and I repeat that the new leadership will emerge peaceably and in a way which will see again, if I can put it this way, that an intelligent appraisal of the self interests of the people of Iran should lead to a fuller and more constructive cooperation with the international community of nations.